

## PART V

## Crops

Major Crops

Because of the importance of livestock farming, Island County is an area in which most the cropland is devoted to the raising of feed crops. About 56 percent of the cropland in 1954 was used to grow hay and oats and other grain. These crops were consumed locally by 7,790 head of cattle, 1,338 sheep and 308 head of horses and mules. The 11,658 acres of harvested cropland in 1954 was planted to the following crops listed in order of importance: hay, oats, wheat, green peas and barley.

Crop Trends

The crop history of any farming region reflects economic changes to a large degree. A number of changes are apparent in the emphasis and acreages Island County farmers have given to leading crops. These show the influence of new market outlets and improved transportation. They also show the influence of the mechanization of agriculture and its consequent decrease in

Total Acres of Cropland Harvested, 1954  
11,658 acres

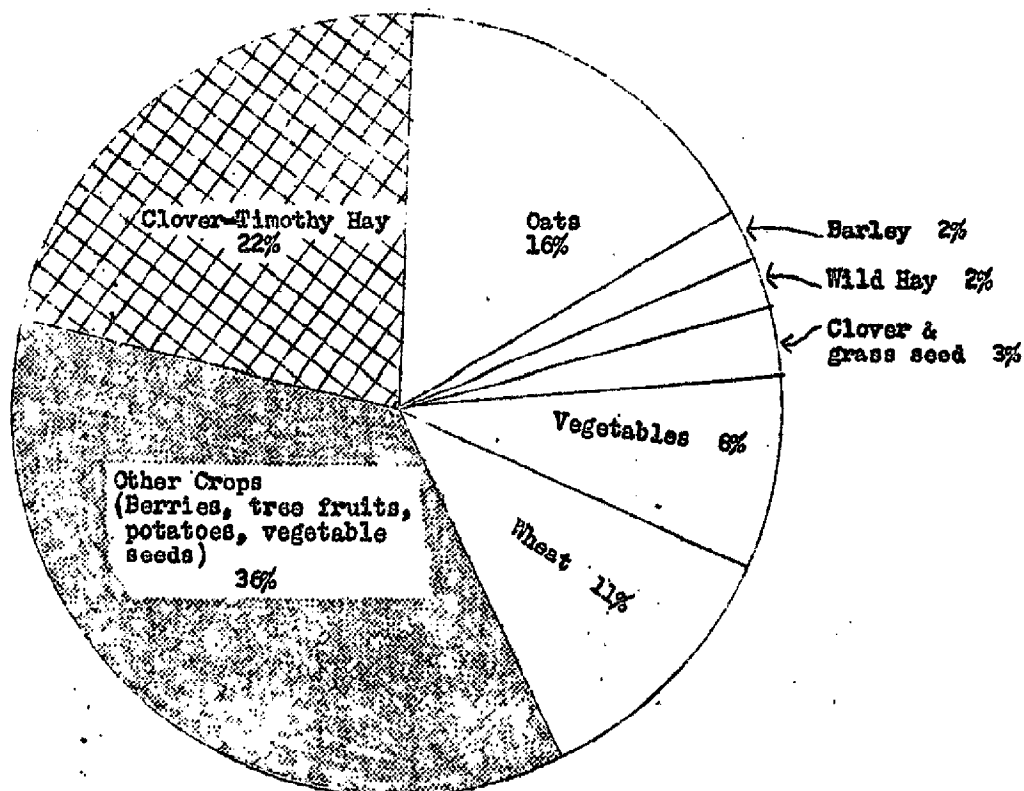


Figure 11.- Percent of Total Cropland in Leading Crops  
Island County, 1954  
(Based on U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1954)

horses which formerly consumed large amounts of grain and hay. Changes in the crop patterns also results from farmers' experiments with various crops and types of farming for specific markets.

Most crops in Island County have remained fairly stable since 1939 with some great fluctuations in wheat in 1949 and hay in 1944 and 1945. There has been a considerable drop in acreage of barley with some increase noted in the last few years. There has also been some drop in vegetables and berries.

#### Hay and Silage Crops

For many years the most important crop from an acreage standpoint has been hay. Hay acreage has ranged from a low of 1,770 acres in 1945 to a high of 2,500 acres in 1954. The amount of hay acreage has remained fairly constant with the greatest fluctuation shown in clover-timothy hay. It has ranged from 380 acres to 2,600 acres. Alfalfa has been more constant with a range of only 1,110 acres. Even though the cattle number has increased the hay acreage has not increased due to loss of hay consumption by horses. Another important part of the total hay picture is that of oats and other small grains which are cut for hay. In addition to this there was 476 acres of wild hay cut for roughage feeding to stock. Grass and grain cut for silage has been increased in recent years. About 45 farms were putting up silage in 1954 compared with 26 in 1949. Island County is a hay deficit area and an estimated 500 to 1,000 tons, mainly alfalfa is trucked in from hay surplus areas in central Washington.

Table 15.- Clover-Timothy and Alfalfa Hay  
Acreage, Yield and Production  
Island County, 1939-1955

Year	Clover and Timothy Hay			Alfalfa Hay		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)
1939	2,100	2.2	4,600	1,940	2.0	3,860
1940	1,800	1.9	3,500	2,200	2.4	5,300
1941	1,400	2.0	2,820	2,300	3.3	7,600
1942	1,200	2.5	3,000	2,000	3.7	7,400
1943	600	1.7	1,000	1,800	2.5	4,500
1944	390	1.9	730	1,430	2.1	3,000
1945	380	2.0	760	1,390	2.5	3,500
1946	570	2.1	1,170	1,730	2.0	3,500
1947	950	2.1	2,000	1,900	2.0	3,800
1948	1,520	2.2	3,400	2,050	3.0	6,100
1949	1,880	1.9	3,600	2,400	2.0	4,800
1950	1,800	1.7	3,100	2,420	2.1	5,100
1951	1,900	2.2	4,200	2,280	2.0	4,600
1952	2,500	2.0	5,000	2,190	2.0	4,400
1953	2,500	1.0	2,500	2,500	2.6	6,400
1954	2,600	2.1	5,500	2,000	2.1	4,200
1955	2,300	2.4	5,500	2,140	3.5	7,400

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Est. Divn.  
State of Washington

Oats and Other Small Grains

Oats, barley and wheat make up the second largest group of crops in terms of acreage. The acreages of oats has fluctuated up and down with two high periods. The acreage was 2,250 in 1939 and was down to 1,500 in 1946. The next high, 2,100 acres, was in 1952 and the acreage in 1955 was down to 1,280 acres. The production has paralleled the acreage with yield the highest in the crop years of 1939 and 1952. Wheat acreage has remained fairly stable with a low period during the 1942-1945 period. A high of 2,020 was harvested in 1948. At one time Island County claimed the world's record for yield per acre. Prior to 1900 some districts on Whidbey Island had yields of about 100 bushels per acre. The acreage of barley has dropped to half of that grown in 1939-1942 and rye has remained fairly stable with only 20-30 acres a year.

Table 16.-- Oats and Rye: Acreage, Yield and Production  
Island County, 1939-1956

Year	Oats (for grain)			Rye (for grain)		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)
1939	2,250	54.0	121,500	30	12.0	360
1940	2,130	42.0	89,460	20	10.5	210
1941	1,980	47.0	93,066	50	17.0	850
1942	1,950	44.0	85,800	50	8.0	400
1943	1,850	45.0	83,250	30	10.0	300
1944	1,830	38.0	69,540	20	7.5	150
1945	1,650	34.0	56,100	20	17.5	350
1946	1,500	41.0	61,500	10	16.0	160
1947	1,700	44.0	74,800	10	14.0	140
1948	2,000	37.0	74,000	30	17.0	510
1949	1,760	46.0	80,960	--	--	--
1950	1,850	45.0	83,250	--	--	--
1951	2,100	45.0	94,500	10	28.0	280
1952	2,100	55.0	115,500	40	11.5	460
1953	1,600	52.0	83,200	10	11.0	110
1954	1,950	45.0	87,750	10	16.0	160
1955	1,240	55.0	68,200	20	11.0	220
1956	720	69.5	50,040	80	20.0	1,600

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimates Division  
State of Washington

Table 17.- Wheat and Barley: Acreage, Yield and Production  
Island County, 1939-1956

Year	Wheat			Barley		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)
1939	1,400	35.9	50,260	640	39.0	24,960
1940	1,300	35.0	45,500	680	38.1	25,900
1941	1,300	40.0	52,000	700	39.7	27,800
1942	990	43.5	43,100	800	40.0	32,000
1943	600	55.0	33,000	720	38.0	27,360
1944	920	41.7	38,360	580	40.0	23,200
1945	830	43.0	35,690	450	36.0	16,200
1946	1,080	42.9	46,300	340	40.0	13,600
1947	1,560	48.3	75,290	360	33.0	11,880
1948	2,020	59.5	120,200	320	34.0	10,880
1949	1,320	35.1	46,320	200	29.0	5,800
1950	1,490	40.1	59,720	220	37.0	8,140
1951	1,830	40.0	73,200	210	38.0	7,980
1952	1,620	47.7	77,220	190	38.0	7,220
1953	1,560	55.7	86,940	220	38.0	8,360
1954	1,190	42.9	51,020	260	41.0	10,660
1955	1,210	53.3	64,440	300	43.0	12,900
1956	720	46.4	33,420	230	52.0	11,960

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimates Division  
State of Washington

Table 18.- Spring Wheat and Winter Wheat  
Island County, 1939-1956

Year	Spring Wheat			Winter Wheat		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)
1939	20	38.0	760	1,380	35.9	49,500
1940	---	---	---	1,300	35.0	45,500
1941	---	---	---	1,300	40.0	52,000
1942	---	---	---	990	43.5	43,100
1943	---	---	---	600	55.0	33,000
1944	10	50.0	500	910	41.6	37,860
1945	---	---	---	830	43.0	35,690
1946	10	40.0	400	1,070	43.0	46,000
1947	20	30.0	600	1,540	48.5	74,690
1948	20	30.0	600	2,000	59.8	119,600
1949	20	8.5	170	1,300	35.5	46,150
1950	100	69.0	6,900	1,390	38.0	52,820
1951	---	---	---	1,830	40.0	73,200
1952	20	21.0	420	1,600	48.0	76,800
1953	60	24.0	1,440	1,510	57.0	85,500
1954	50	40.0	2,000	1,140	43.0	49,020
1955	50	36.0	1,800	1,160	54.0	62,640
1956	40	28.0	1,120	680	47.5	32,300

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimates Division  
State of Washington

Berries

Berry growing is a minor part of specialty crop agriculture in Island County. Most of the berry farms are located at the south end of Whidbey Island. Strawberries, raspberries and loganberries make up the biggest percent of total berry acreage. A large share of the berry crop is used for home consumption and immediate retail markets.

The acreage has varied from 107 acres in 1939 to 13 acres in 1944 and back up to 113 acres in 1949. Island County in 1954 and 1955 was the state's leading producer of commercial loganberries, growing over half the total crop. In recent years most of Whidbey Island loganberry production has been utilized by the wine-making industry in Seattle. Nearly all the loganberries are grown on a wine company farm at Greenbank on central Whidbey Island.

Table 19.- Berries: Island County, 1949-1957

Year	Strawberries		Raspberries (Red)		Loganberries	
	Acres	Tons	Acres	Tons	Acres	Tons
1949	49	66	2	2	---	---
1950	2/	---	---	---	---	---
1951	---	---	---	---	---	---
1952	---	---	---	---	---	---
1953	50	100	---	---	---	---
1954	90	170	5	5	50	95
1955	90	125	5	5	50	45
1956 2/	20	20	---	---	---	---
1957	20	40	5	5	60	120

1/ No data available on berries for 1950 and 1951.

2/ Decline resulted from freeze damage of November 1955.

Source: U.S.D.A., Agric. Est. Division  
State of Washington

Vegetables

Island County ranked 14th in the state in vegetable production with 889 acres in 1954. Vegetable production for commercial markets is almost entirely done in the northern half of Whidbey Island. This is due to the soil and drainage conditions that exist there.

The main vegetable is green peas with 521 acres in 1954. Other commercial vegetables of importance are potatoes, squash and carrots. A large amount of winter squash is grown in the Coupeville area. This squash is shipped to Seattle and Puget Sound markets during the winter months. Squash is grown in the Coupeville area by 10 to 15 growers. Acreage since 1954 has been about 400 acres. Vegetable production on the island is limited due to market inaccessibility with most of production going to freezer and canning operations in Skagit County. With the exception of squash there is very little commercial truck farming due to market distance to Seattle.

Table 20.- Commercial Vegetables: Island County  
1939-1954

Year	Green Peas	Squash	Potatoes	Carrots
	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres
1939	717	203	173	7
1944	328	NA	90	NA
1949	296	NA	67	5
1954	521	400 1/2	32	10

NA - Figures not available for these dates.

1/ Estimate of Whidbey Island Squash Grower's Assn.

Source: U.S. Census, AgricultureTree Fruits and Nuts

Fruit production and the culture of filbert nuts are of minor importance in Island County. The acreage of orchard land has decreased the last few years. There was a drop from 634 producing farms in 1949 to 68 in 1954. Orchards in Island County were at their peak in the 1900-1910 period. As the commercial production of fruit increased in the irrigated valleys of eastern Washington, commercial production in Island County decreased sharply. Most tree fruit is for local and on-farm use. Filbert production began after 1920 and reached a peak of 5,990 acres in 1950. Since that year it has declined slightly. The acreage of grapes has been increasing rapidly and in 1954 there were 4,964 acres in commercial production.

Table 21.- Grapevines of Bearing Age, Grapes Harvested  
Island County, 1939-1954

Year	Grapevines of Bearing Age	Grapes Harvested (pounds)
1939	235	765
1944	NA	1,160
1949	302	460
1954	4,964	50,000

NA - not available

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Table 22.- Bearing Fruit and Nut Trees  
Island County, 1900-1954

Year	Numbers of Bearing Trees					
	Apples	Filberts	Cherries	Peaches	Pears	Prunes & Plums
1900	35,652	--	1,852	45	1,724	6,145
1910	28,511	--	2,728	17	1,438	1,969
1920	15,834	--	2,396	204	1,831	2,025
1930	8,538	--	3,296	187	1,799	1,457
1940	7,082	1,247	4,347	120	1,953	1,763
1950	5,028	5,990	1,382	163	1,220	1,130
1954 1/	1,353	2,418	416	72	314	200

1/ 1954 figures are for trees in orchards of 20 trees or more.

Sources: Washington Tree Fruits, Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service, U.S.D.A. and Washington State Dept. of Agric., Cooperating, 1952.  
U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Nursery and Greenhouse Products: Flowers, Bulbs and Plants

Horticultural specialties make up a very small part of the total agriculture picture in Island County. The dollar value of sales from these specialties has decreased in the last few years. The main part of the farms engaged in the growing of flowers and bulbs, etc., are small and are operated as a sideline.

The main area for this type of farming is located at the north end of Whidbey Island around Coupeville and Oak Harbor. There are some holly farms but the primary type of farm is the raising of Iris bulbs. There are also quite a few farms that grow flowering plants; some farms raise rhododendron plants.

Table 23.- Horticultural Specialties: Nursery Products, Greenhouse Products, Flowers, Plants, Bulbs, Seeds, Mushrooms and other Special Plants.  
Island County, 1939-1954

Census Year	Nursery Products (shrubs, trees and ornamentals)		Flowers and flowering plants, bulbs and seeds; vegetables, vegetable seeds, plants, mushrooms grown in fields and under glass for sale.		
	Acres Planted	Sales from Nurseries	Acres in open fields	Greenhouse space (square feet under glass)	Sales from farms during the year
1939	18	\$ 2,563	150	--	\$ 28,145
1944	1/	--	--	--	--
1949	24	\$41,000	242	6,220	\$144,168
1954	--	100	102	--	65,120

1/ No Census information available for 1944.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Table 24. Island County's Rank Compared With  
Other Washington Counties

Item Compared	Rank	Quantity	Year
<b>General</b>			
Land area.....	39	131,840 acres	1954
Number of farms.....	27	657 farms	1954
Land in farms--percent.....	20	35.1 percent	1954
Average size of farms.....	34	71 acres	1954
Cropland harvested.....	32	11,658 acres	1954
Rural farm population.....	25	3,193 persons	1950
Total county population.....	28	11,079 persons	1950
<b>Cash farm income</b>			
Value of all farm products sold.....	30	2,588,862 dollars	1954
Value of livestock sold.....	22	2,028,831 dollars	1954
Value of crops sold.....	29	471,242 dollars	1954
<b>Livestock on farms</b>			
Cattle and calves.....	33	7,790	1954
Milk cows.....	21	2,381 head	1954
Hogs.....	31	821 head	1954
Chickens.....	12	92,593 birds	1954
Horses and mules.....	35	308 head	1954
Sheep and lambs.....	24	1,338 head	1954
<b>Dairy and poultry products sold</b>			
Value of dairy products sold.....	29	465,906 dollars	1954
Whole milk sold.....	19	11,701,000 pounds	1954
Value of poultry products sold.....	9	1,251,190 dollars	1954
Chickens sold.....	28	142,155 birds	1954
Eggs sold.....	11	1,443,731 dozen	1954
<b>Important crops harvested</b>			
Oats.....	21	1,950 acres	1954
Clover and timothy.....	20	2,600 acres	1954
Vegetables.....	34	889 acres	1954
Fruits.....	31	107 acres	1954

Source: U.S. Censuses of Agriculture, 1950, 1954.